

Rejoicing in Heaven

Nicole gazed in the mirror again at the shimmering white satin gown that caressed her 5-foot, 8-inch frame. It was the final fitting for her wedding dress.

“Lovely,” breathed her mother, Phyllis. “That is just so lovely.”

Nicole was at her fitting with her mother, sister, and best friend, and the three women were absolutely thrilled at her choice.

The young woman gazed back in the mirror, lost in her thoughts. She was marrying a wonderful man who loved her so much! How grateful she was that the Lord had brought her and Leon together. She had taken some time in warming up to the practical young man, observing him carefully. Nicole had come to learn that he was good, earnest, and true. Once she had been drawn to his character, she found herself caring for Leon, and found it easy to love him and commit to him.

Christ, like Leon, had pursued Nicole years ago, and how grateful she was! She loved the Lord with all her mind, heart, and soul. She had spent time growing more in love with Christ, getting to know Him more deeply and becoming a better woman of God. One day, the Lord would come for her, or she would go to Him.

She was part of the Bride of Christ who would be dressed on that Great Day in the righteousness of Jesus. What a wedding day that would be!

1. *Why is a wedding a time to celebrate?*

2. *How is celebrating what Jesus has done for you like celebrating at a wedding?*

3. *Do you celebrate what Jesus has done for you throughout the day no matter what kind of day you are having? Explain your answer.*

Spontaneous Praise

Revelation 19:1-3, KJV

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

Revelation 19:1-3, NIV

¹After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

²for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute

who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

³And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

In verse 1, praise for God erupts among the multitudes in heaven because of the Lord’s destruction of Babylon, “the great prostitute” (vs. 2). The text does not say how they know about this or if they actually saw it; we only know that its annihilation caused great rejoicing in heaven.

In contrast to the mourning on earth because of the fall of this enemy of God, shouts of “Hallelujah” echo throughout heaven. Although the word appears repeatedly in Psalms, it does not occur in the New Testament before we see it in these verses.

Why would this multitude say that the Lord’s “judgments” are “true and just” (vs. 2) for destroying what appears to be an earthly kingdom? It’s because He is avenging “the blood of his servants.” Some believe that the very ones praising the Lord in heaven at this time had earlier experienced martyrdom at the hands of the

antichrist and his cohorts in Babylon.

Our worship of the Lord and praise for what He has accomplished on our behalf will come naturally in eternity. We do not see anyone telling this multitude to rejoice; the praise erupts spontaneously in response to the Lord's avenging the death of His own servants.

The praise of this group concludes with these curious words in verse 3: "The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." This seems to indicate the intense, eternal judgment and punishment of Babylon. The wording reflects that of Isaiah 34:10 where the prophet depicts the Lord's future vengeance on the nations that have oppressed Israel.

4. *What is the significance of the fact that the praise for the Lord is spontaneous among those in heaven?*

5. *Why is the multitude crying out with hallelujahs at the Lord's destruction of an earthly kingdom?*

Worship Before God's Throne

Revelation 19:4-5, KJV

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

Revelation 19:4-5, NIV

⁴The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!"

⁵Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

"Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both great and small!"

Verse 4 introduces another group that joins the chorus of praise. This group, described as "the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures," affirms the praise of the multitude adding their own "Hallelujah!" to the chorus.

We first met this group of elders and “living creatures” in Revelation 4—5. Here in verse 4, the apostle watches as they worshiped the Lord by falling down before Him.

The text does not identify the source of the voice that John heard coming out “from the throne” (vs. 5), but it’s likely that of an angel rather than the Lord Himself since it encourages the Lord’s servants to worship Him.

The phrase at the end of verse 5, “both great and small” tells us that praise should not come from just a select group of redeemed, but from all those in heaven regardless of their previous standing on earth.

Psalms 115:13 says that the Lord “will bless those who fear [Him]—small and great alike.” Our worship arises from all His bountiful blessings He has showered upon us, and in eternity we will all join in spontaneous worship of the Lord.

6. How do the 24 elders and four living creatures express their worship of God?

Loud and Jubilant Celebration

Revelation 19:6-8, KJV

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Revelation 19:6-8, NIV

⁶Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

⁸Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people).

Notice the words John uses in verse 6 to describe the praise for the Lord that he heard. It seemed to him “like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder.” The apostle heard loud and jubilant praise for the Lord that resounded through heaven like loud thunder.

What is the cause of such celebration? It’s because “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (vs. 6, KJV). Imagine these words, adapted into what we know as the Hallelujah Chorus, proclaimed with deafening volume in heaven. The destruction of Satan’s domain, Babylon, has opened the door to Jesus’ triumphant rule over the nations.

Verse 7 introduces another amazing event: the “wedding of the Lamb.” Weddings in first century A.D. Israel were the social highlight of any community. Such occasions could last up to a week amid feasting and joyous celebration. This “wedding supper of the Lamb” (vs. 9) caps the joyous worship and loud hallelujahs that continue to ring throughout the heavens as this marriage festivity continues for days or weeks. Many believe that the bride represents the New Testament church and equate the lengthy wedding celebrations of ancient Galilee to this celebration.

The loud rejoicing attributes all the glory to the Lord. Without His death on the Cross, no human would be in heaven praising His name. His defeat of Satan on the Cross has climaxed in His destruction of the devil’s world empire paving the way for His rule.

The “fine linen” worn by the bride depicts “the righteous acts of God’s holy people” (vs. 8). Scripture makes it clear that our works have no place in our salvation (Titus 3:4-7). The reference to the “righteous acts” of the believers does not indicate salvation by works, but represents the results of changed lives.

7. *How does John describe the praise he heard while in heaven?*

8. *What are the “righteous acts” of God’s people represented by the “fine linen” that they wore?*

He Loves His Bride!

Everyone had said Keith “wasn’t the marrying type.” He always had more than one girlfriend, and he himself said he would never marry because, “There are too many beautiful women in the world.”

However, when 35-year-old Keith made Jesus his Lord, all those thoughts and opinions changed. He often heard Pastor Hemp say, “Ephesians 5:25 reads, ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her’...” Pastor Hemp added, “As part of God’s church, we are all part of the bride that Christ loves with all His heart.” The idea touched Keith deep in his soul.

As Keith’s relationship with Christ grew deeper, he understood more and more the great love Jesus had for him and how much he did not deserve Christ’s unconditional and unlimited love. When Keith met Christiana, his love for her was overwhelming to him. He said seeing her for the first time changed his views and perceptions on marriage. “You made me want a marriage that mirrors Christ’s life-giving love for the Church,” Keith said as he proposed to Christiana that one beautiful night under the Georgia moonlight. “I love you and I want you forever in my life as my wife. Will you marry me?” Christiana’s eyes filled with happy tears as she said, “Yes and Yes again!”

We celebrate a Savior who loves us deeply. Our deep love for others, like our spouses, reminds us that God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (Jer. 31:3).

9. *Why is a groom marrying his bride a good metaphor for Christ loving His Church?*

10. *What examples of deep and abiding love have you seen between a bride and groom?*

11. *Why is the Scripture about Christ loving the Church as much as a husband loves his bride important to remember?*

Let Us Be Glad

Be glad the Lamb of God loves us! Be glad we are the bride of Christ! What an honor and privilege to be chosen. Be glad and thankful for the compassion of Jesus that makes us confident and at peace. We are thankful for His sacrifice and commitment to the needs of His bride.

► *If you are a follower of Christ, you have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Write a thank you note as an invited guest and why you are so delighted to be invited.*

KEY VERSE

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

—Revelation 19:7, KJV

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

—Revelation 19:7, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 22 through November 28

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Genesis 20:1-7, 14-16—God Speaks to a Pagan King.

Tues. Acts 10:1-8—An Angel Speaks to Cornelius.

Wed. Acts 10:9-22—A Vision of Inclusion.

Thurs. 1 Kings 10:1-9—The Queen of Sheba Blesses God.

Fri. Luke 7:1-10—A Centurion Comes to Jesus.

Sat. Acts 10:23-33—Peter Enters Cornelius's House.

Sun. Acts 10:34-47—God Shows No Partiality.